DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 383 875 CE 069 223

TITLE Toward a National Youth Development System. How We Can Better Serve Youth at Risk. A Report to the Secretary of Labor Based on Findings of the National Youth Employment Coalition.

INSTITUTION National Youth Employment Coalition, Washington, DC.

PUB DATE Oct 94

NOTE 34p.

PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.

DESCRIPTORS Economic Development; Educational Needs; *Employment Problems; *Employment Programs; *Futures (of Society); *Government Role; Job Training; Late Adolescents; Policy Formation; Postsecondary Education; *Public Policy; Secondary Education; Young Adults; *Youth Employment

ABSTRACT

The consensus of many organizations in the youth employment field is that the United States needs a bold new approach to youth employment and training. The development of a broad, national youth development strategy is recommended. The strategy should include the following: (1) a multi-year investment in a young person's development; (2) workforce preparation and training; (3) education that provides opportunities to develop and apply higher-order academic skills and critical thinking skills to real-life situations; (4) higher education to equip youth for a fast-changing and increasingly competitive world economy; (5) options and choices for youth to move through multiple jobs and developmental experiences over time; (6) individualized plans that respond to assessed needs and goals of youth; (7) opportunities for young people to interact with both peers and adults in work situations; (8) community support; and (9) accountability mechanisms that would serve as a professional development support strategy. In support of this strategy, the United States should take the following actions: convene a White House Development Summit; launch a process to develop national youth development goals; create a national professional development capacity, including the establishment of accrediting mechanisms; and conduct national demonstration programs to learn better how to help out-of-school youth join the work force. (An appendix lists the members of the National Youth Employment Coalition and provides information on the development of the report.) (KC)

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TOWARD A NATIONAL YOUTH DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM

HOW WE CAN BETTER SERVE YOUTH AT RISK

A REPORT TO THE SECRETARY OF LABOR

BASED ON FINDINGS OF THE
NATIONAL YOUTH EMPLOYMENT COALITION

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OCTOBER 1994

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CONTENTS

Transmittal Letter ii

Executive Summary ..... ES 1

Youth Development as a Framework for Serving At-Risk Youth ..... ES 1
An Action Agenda: A National Commitment to Youth ..... ES 1
Principal Findings—How We Can Better Serve At-Risk Youth ..... ES 4

Introduction 1

Which Youth Are At-Risk? 2
How Can We Improve Services to At-Risk Youth? 3
What Do We Mean by Youth Development? 3

An Action Agenda: A National Commitment to Youth 5

1. Convene a White House Youth Development Summit 5
2. Launch a Process to Develop National Youth Development Goals 6
3. Create a National Professional Development Capacity, Including the Establishment of Accrediting Mechanisms 6
4. Conduct national demonstrations to learn better how to help out-of-school youth join the workforce 7

Principal Findings: How We Can Better Serve At-Risk Youth 7

Finding #1: Quick Fixes Are Ineffective 7
What We Need: Long Term Coherent Youth Development Services 8
Opportunities for Immediate Action 10

Finding #2: Current Quality Assurance Mechanisms Are Inadequate 10
What We Need: High Standards, Outcome Measures and Professional Development 11
Opportunities for Immediate Action 13

Finding #3: Youth Program Governance is Fragmented 13
What We Need: A National System for Youth Program Planning and Accountability 14
Opportunities for Immediate Action 14

Finding #4: There Are Only Islands of Excellence in a Sea of Mediocrity 15
What We Need: Bridges to Connect Best Practice 15
Opportunities for Immediate Action 16

Finding #5: Administrivia Gets In The Way 17
What We Need: A Seamless, Simplified Management Information System 17
Opportunities for Immediate Action 18

Some Implications of These Findings 18

Appendix ..... A 1

National Youth Employment Coalition ..... A 2
How This Report Was Prepared ..... A 3
Acknowledgments ..... A 3
Papers Commissioned by the National Youth Employment Coalition ..... A 4

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October 1994

Honorable Robert B. Reich
Secretary of Labor
U.S. Department of Labor
200 Constitution Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20210

Dear Secretary Reich:

The National Youth Employment Coalition is pleased to submit this report of our observations about the current state of employment and training programs for disadvantaged young people in America. This report synthesizes the views of many leading organizations in the youth employment field who are members of our broad-based Coalition—all of whom share the vision of a youth development system in which young people in America receive the skills training, education, experiences, guidance and support to help them become contributing citizens and self-sufficient and productive adults.

We present a consensus view that our nation needs a bold new approach to youth employment and training. Tinkering at the margins will not fix what's wrong with our current system—we need youth policies, processes and strategies that are developmental, long-term and coherent. In this report, we use the term "youth development" to mean an approach to young people which integrates training, employment, education, health, welfare, attitudes, values, and all other physical, social and emotional aspects of a young person's development to responsible adulthood. To that end, we believe that we should build on what works, and be willing to discard what doesn't; learn from best practices; and listen to the voices of experience in our field today. This requires thinking about youth training within a broader youth development context, and extending the dialogue beyond the usual cadre of experts in job training and employment programs.

We strongly urge the development of a broad, national youth development strategy which includes:

- A multi-year investment in a young person's development that begins early, is age- and stage-appropriate, and individually tailored to specific needs;
- Workforce preparation and training to enable and encourage long-term attachment to the labor force;
- Education that provides opportunities to develop and apply higher order academic skills and critical thinking skills to real life situations;
- Higher education to equip our young people for a fast-changing and increasingly competitive world economy;
- Options and choices for young people to move through multiple jobs and developmental experiences over time;

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- Individualized plans that respond to assessed needs and goals of youth;
- Opportunities for young people to interact with both peers and adults in work situations; and
- Community supports along the way to help youth become productive workers and responsible citizens, today and tomorrow.
- Accountability mechanisms which would, in effect, serve as a professional development support strategy.

What follows is more than a report. We mean to suggest an action agenda, setting out both immediate opportunities and longer range goals. We hope this will be of help to policy makers and practitioners alike, as we strive to strengthen programs for all young people. We particularly hope that it is helpful to you, as you consider your program and budget priorities in the year ahead. And, we call on you, both as Secretary of Labor, and as an advisor to the President, to be a convener of your colleagues in other federal agencies, and to take a broad leadership role in spearheading a national youth development policy process and action agenda.

We all need to do a better job of developing young people as human beings and as human resources, and it is particularly urgent that we find new ways to reach those youth most in need. From an economic and a social point of view, at-risk youth should be viewed as "high-opportunity youth," because while the risks may be greater, so, too, are the potential returns on our investment.

We appreciate the opportunity to work in partnership with you and your colleagues on developing better approaches to youth workforce development. We hope you will continue to call on our help.

Sincerely,

Erik Payne Butler
Chair
National Youth Employment Coalition

TOWARD A NATIONAL YOUTH DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM
HOW WE CAN BETTER SERVE YOUTH AT RISK

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Youth Development as a Framework for Serving At-Risk Youth. A quick-fix summer job or brief training program isn't enough to change the life of most at-risk youth in today's world. The evidence shows that short-term services lead to short-sighted outcomes. If we hope to bring the most at-risk youth into the mainstream of American economic life, we need to craft and implement a national youth training, education, employment and development strategy that is coherent and long-term. While the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) was not designed as a youth development system, with some adjustments and improvements in the short term, it could be re-directed toward developmental ends. In the short term, by combining and experimenting with existing programs and authorities, we can build on what works and continue to demonstrate better approaches on a pilot basis. We know that JTPA can contribute to a more effective long-term youth development approach which includes education, training, work experiences and personal supports.

We believe it is both possible and timely to broaden the range of stakeholders and raise the stakes for youth development in this country. We envision a process to engage policy leaders across sectors and among the different levels of government, community leaders, educators, business leaders, and others with a stake in our nation's future, to develop national youth policies and strategies to support them. Beyond what one federal agency or its youth programs can accomplish alone, we suggest a strategy that takes advantage of the vast wealth of expertise available throughout our nation, in 15,000 plus school districts, countless social service agencies, thousands of community service organizations, youth service agencies, and business and industry associations. We suggest that the federal government can be the catalyst, the convener, and the collaboration-builder, but the goals should be bolder and the process should be broader than any one federal agency could accomplish single-handedly.

What follows is an action agenda that describes what we believe is needed to fundamentally re-invent our nation's systems and services for youth, and a summary of our findings and suggested solutions.

An Action Agenda: A National Commitment to Youth. The National Youth Employment Coalition believes that a coherent youth development system requires a perspective and collective effort that extends across diverse federal agencies and includes a broad spectrum of sectors, including federal, state and local government, business and industry, community-based organizations, and non-profit and youth serving agencies. Youth development must include not only employment and training, but secondary and post-secondary education, juvenile justice, health and human services, national and community service, housing and neighborhood revitalization, and other areas in which youth have needs and can serve as valuable resources. Our view of youth development is that high-risk youth are more appropriately "high-opportunity" youth, because the potential returns on our investments are substantial, and the consequences of our failure to invest appropriately are so palpable. What is "at-risk" is not just our youth, but our economic future, our quality of life, our families, and our communities. Such stakes require a broad, national response.

As an interim first step, the National Youth Employment Coalition suggests that the Department of Labor should create and support a temporary Council on Quality in Youth Training, comprised of representatives of the youth employment and training stakeholder community. The role of this Council would be to identify TQM principles, practices, and measurement tools that could be applied systematically to promote quality assurance.

The National Youth Employment Coalition envisions a new national commitment to and investment in youth development—one encompassing the development of a national youth policy, national youth development goals and standards, and national youth development strategies, support structures, and accountability mechanisms. Specifically, our bold new vision suggests that as a nation, we should:

1. Convene a White House Youth Development Summit.

It is essential to signal to the American people that youth are a priority, that they are resources to be developed and nurtured to reach their full potential. With a White House Summit on youth, we could set the stage by declaring that all youth have the potential to be not only literate, but also lifelong learners; not only employable, but also productive workers; not only self-sufficient, but also contributing citizens. This Summit would be a forum to highlight the needs of young people, particularly those who are out of school or well behind grade level; the needs of employers and the projected needs of the labor market; the needs of the system for capacity building and staff development; the needs of the nation, in terms of long-term research and an action agenda; and to promote and display programs that exemplify success in spite of the odds. A White House Youth Development Summit is also the logical launching pad for the national youth development goal-setting process described in #2 below.

2. Launch a Process to Develop National Youth Development Goals.

The new national youth development system needs policy and program goals at all levels that are high, clear, measurable and attainable. To develop these national goals, we need to initiate a broad-based national goals-setting process for transition of all youth to productive work, continuing education and responsible adulthood, modeled on our national education goals. The goal-setting process must invite all stakeholders to participate, to assure that they follow through with the policies and programs needed to achieve them. We endorse the creation of a non-partisan, free-standing institution to lead the goal-setting effort. Once goals are established, this institution should be empowered to track progress toward those goals. This National Report Card will help policy makers focus on progress, practitioners focus on areas that need improvement, and young people focus on pathways to economic security and responsible adulthood.

Modeled on the process for setting national education goals, the President, Congress, Governors, Mayors and other local elected officials, the Independent Sector, United Way, and service providers all need to focus on the same set of goals for youth development. Above partisan politics, and beyond narrow institutional perspectives, these goals must address the key ingredients in developing youth to become lifelong learners, productive workers, responsible individuals and contributing citizens. Once these goals are established, we will need to develop standards by which to measure progress, and a mechanism to communicate that progress to young people, parents, employers, and all other taxpayers.

3. Create a National Professional Development Capacity, including the Establishment of Accrediting Mechanisms.

A national non–partisan, non–governmental body could be established to develop standards for best practices in youth employment and youth development. It could certify organizations that subscribe to these principles and demonstrate that they have a positive impact on the lives and economic opportunities of young people. It could specify standards for professional development and capacity building. Similar to the standards being developed in the educational arena, these youth development standards could be developed by a broadly defined group of youth service providers, policy makers, elected officials and other practitioners. Organizations and programs meeting the standards could receive accreditation in recognition of their demonstrated commitment to the highest standards of excellence.

Accreditation can be a positive force when it is supported by practitioners who are energized to raise the standards of the system, pool expertise, and help all programs reach for more efficient and effective services. The time is ripe to lead a movement of exemplary programs, committed to developing the human potential of young people and meeting the needs of employers for motivated, skilled competent employees.

4. Conduct national demonstrations to learn better how to help out-of-school youth join the workforce.

The U.S. Department of Labor, in conjunction with other appropriate agencies, should create, fund and support demonstration programs that experiment with effective ways to prepare youth for employment, continuing education, and adulthood. Clearly, we need to test policy alternatives, experiment with new techniques, devise incentives and demolish barriers for out-of-school youth. We would suggest pilots on a scale sufficient to impact all at-risk youth within whole neighborhoods or communities within large urban areas. These demonstrations should include transitions from alternative education to careers, patterned after the school-to-work models, and entrepreneurship and micro-enterprise development.

Training for high-skilled occupations, and early career education and awareness through collaborations with middle schools could be imbedded in these demonstrations. Likewise, these demonstrations could include experimental approaches to assessment, counseling, case management, leadership development, life-skills development, employability development, follow-up, and sustained services over the long-term.

All demonstrations should include rigorous data collection and evaluation to measure impacts and returns on investment. Likewise, these pilots and demonstrations should be developed with a view toward broader replication and transferability, experimenting with adaptations necessary under different geographic and economic conditions.

Principal Findings—How We Can Better Serve At-Risk Youth

This Report calls for a national re-thinking of how we plan, implement, and measure efforts to develop young people in our country. By looking back over experience, we have developed findings about what needs to be changed, and by thinking ahead, we have developed suggestions about how to make these changes:

Finding #1: Quick Fixes are Ineffective. Programs that focus on short-term training services or employment preparation goals alone are insufficient for most youth in at-risk circumstances. Evaluations have only confirmed what our Coalition members already knew from direct experience—that short-term, single focus programs are usually largely ineffective for youth at risk.

What We Need: Long-term Coherent Youth Development Services. Our nation needs coherent youth development policies and programs which incorporate positive youth development principles and strategies that support them.

Finding #2: Current Quality Assurance Mechanisms Are Inadequate. The current mechanisms for and investments in quality assurance, including measurement tools, management tools, and staff development supports, are inadequate.

What We Need: High Standards, Outcome Measures and Professional Development. Our nation needs goals, standards and outcome measures for youth development that are commensurate with what we are trying to achieve. Likewise, we need professional development that builds capacity to more effectively serve youth most at-risk.

Finding #3: Youth Program Governance is Fragmented. Rearranging the existing organizational boxes within a particular federal agency will not provide the type of cross-cutting, integrated federal, state and local governance structure needed to radically improve the quality of services we provide to young people.

What We Need: A National System for Youth Program Planning and Accountability. Our nation needs a national system or infrastructure that fortifies the federal, state, local, public and private collaborations on behalf of youth.

Finding #4: There are Only Islands of Excellence in a Sea of Mediocrity. While there are many individual programs that work and large numbers of professionals who succeed in spite of the odds, we have not managed to transfer expertise, transmit knowledge and replicate success at the scale or pace that is needed.

What We Need: Bridges to Connect Best Practices. Our nation needs to invest in mechanisms to support replication of best practices and adaptation of successful program models, experimentation with incentives, cross-fertilization with other youth serving fields, and other strategies that build capacity and expand effective programs for youth most-in-need.

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Finding #5: Administrivia Gets In The Way.
The paperwork involved in administering the programs—extensive and redundant documentation, lack of common definitions across programs for elements as fundamental as eligibility determination—creates a bureaucratic bog.

What We Need: A Seamless, Simplified Management Information System.
Our nation needs a computerized management information system that is coordinated, streamlined, accessible and portable across programs and agencies—from eligibility to intake to case management through follow-up.

TOWARD A NATIONAL YOUTH DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM
HOW WE CAN BETTER SERVE YOUTH AT RISK

INTRODUCTION

The National Youth Employment Coalition calls for a national re-thinking of how we plan, implement, and measure efforts to develop young people in our country. Looking back, we see how the current system has evolved over time, as a patchwork quilt of policies, programs and services. Fragments of the whole have been pieced together over many decades, under different leaders, by different craftspeople, using different patterns, and different specifications for the finished product. This lack of continuity in vision, in resources, in political agendas, and in practice has produced a home-made crazy quilt that provides young people uneven coverage, little protection and less comfort. For those young people who are out of school, out of work, and just plain out in the cold, our blanket protection is too thin, too skimpy, and filled with holes.

Building on experience, learning from best practice and thinking ahead, we believe we know what needs changing. We envision a national process to craft a new youth development system in America which builds on best practices in employment, training, education, social services and community supports. With a national commitment and a corresponding national process, we believe it is possible to weave an entirely new youth development fabric, flexible enough to fit young people at different ages and stages in their development, with different aspirations and expectations.

Our report suggests that as a nation, we need a bold, new approach—tinkering at the margins will not fix what's wrong with our current system. We need youth development policies, processes and strategies that are developmental, long-term and coherent. In this report, we use the term "youth development" to mean an approach to young people which integrates training, employment, education, health, welfare, attitudes, values, and all other physical, social and emotional aspects of a young person's development to economic self-sufficiency and responsible adulthood.

To that end, we believe that we should build on what works, and be willing to discard what doesn't; learn from best practices; and listen to the voices of experience in our field today. This requires thinking about youth training within a broader youth development context, integrating youth development principles and measurements, and extending the dialogue beyond the usual cadre of experts in job training and employment programs. We believe that the Secretary of Labor can be the catalyst for convening other relevant federal stakeholders, national, state and local organizations, including both the public and private sectors, to develop and build consensus around a set of national youth development goals.

The National Youth Employment Coalition endorses the inclusion of the following in a coherent youth development strategy:

- A multi-year investment in a young person's development that begins early, is age- and stage-appropriate, and individually tailored to specific needs;
- Individualized plans that respond to assessed needs and goals of youth;

- Opportunities for young people to interact with both peers and adults in work situations; and
- Workforce preparation and training to enable and encourage long-term attachment to the labor force;
- Education that provides opportunities to develop and apply higher order academic skills and critical thinking skills to real life situations;
- Higher education to equip our young people for a fast-changing and increasingly competitive world economy.
- Options and choices for young people to move through multiple jobs and developmental experiences over time;
- Community supports along the way to help youth become productive workers and responsible citizens, today and tomorrow.
- Accountability mechanisms which would, in effect, serve as a professional development support strategy.

A national youth development system, which integrates training, employment, education, and social supports could provide the framework for policies and practices which serve all youth, especially low-income, out-of-school and at-risk youth. It could help clarify roles and responsibilities for federal, state and local government, and engage all relevant stakeholders in the process. Youth program goals and standards would reflect outcomes which respond to the long term needs of youth and communities. Well-trained, highly competent professional youth workers would tailor individualized plans to the expressed and assessed needs of youth and employers. A coherent and complete range of services would be available, training would be appropriately linked with placement, and a job would not necessarily become an "end" but rather a means of youth development. Long-term follow-up would be the norm, and new definitions of success would take into account the starting place for each young person.

Which Youth Are At-Risk?

The problems facing America's youth today are well-documented. Statistics show that alarming numbers of our young people are poor, undereducated, unemployed, turning to crime and too-early parenthood. Any one of these factors is enough to put a young person at risk, but typically, these problems are interrelated and cumulative. Many young people are poor, unemployed, single parents and dropouts. And they live surrounded by others in similar circumstances, in what the Annie E. Casey Foundation describes as "severely distressed neighborhoods."

It is estimated that some 3.9 million American children are growing up in severely distressed neighborhoods, in which there are high levels of poverty, female-headed families, high school dropouts, unemployment, and reliance on welfare. Minorities are disproportionately among those at-risk. While they are only 25 percent of all children in the country, African-American and Latino children comprise over 80 percent of children living in severely distressed neighborhoods.

Poor communities also have fewer resources and lack institutions that can offer young people developmental services, opportunities or supports. Thus, lacking role models, adequate education, workforce preparation and economic opportunities, these youth see little opportunity for self-sufficient, productive futures. And some youth, such as teen parents, the physically challenged, juvenile offenders, and others are particularly vulnerable by virtue of their status and people's attitudes, fears, stereotypes or prejudices. These youth, too, are very clearly at risk.

Many other young people may also be at substantial risk at particular times in the course of their development. Often young people need help making certain transitions, from school to school, school to work, or youth to adulthood. Many in-school youth are, at times, quite at risk—at risk of dropping out or tuning out. In 1992, the School Dropout rate was 11% nationally. In some urban school districts, the dropout rate approaches 50%. While the percentage of dropouts is declining, the costs of dropping out are increasing, with lower earnings and taxes, and higher welfare and social support costs.

How Can We Improve Services To At-Risk Youth?

The National Youth Employment Coalition believes that our nation's youth development system should be designed to serve any and all youth who need assistance or supports to become equipped for employment, advanced education, and responsible adulthood. Using this developmental approach, those with greater needs would likely need to receive greater assistance, but young people who are marginally at-risk, or at risk only at certain points in their development would receive appropriate assistance when and where warranted. We make a special plea for equity and access.

Many current youth initiatives, including the School-to-Work Opportunities Act and Goals 2000 focus on the needs of in-school youth. Still others, such as the Youth Fair Chance Grants, Empowerment Zones, and the proposed Y.E.S. program in the 1994 Crime Bill, are geographically targeted, attempting to saturate certain communities. Our proposed youth development system would connect these initiatives, initiatives for out-of-school youth, and others in a continuum of services and supports for young people. Through expanded and strengthened involvement of community-based organizations (CBOs), other voluntary agencies and local youth-serving agencies, at-risk youth would have access to such services and related follow-up.

What Do We Mean By Youth Development?

Evaluations document that our nation's initiatives aimed at low income, at-risk youth do not produce lasting results. This is not surprising to members of the National Youth Employment Coalition, or anyone working on the front lines with this vulnerable population. Short-term interventions don't stand a chance of compensating for a lifetime of poverty, poor education, inadequate health care, drug and alcohol problems, broken homes and severely distressed neighborhood environments. In his paper for the Coalition, Gary Walker of P/PV suggests that "...over the past two decades a considerable and consistent body of evaluation evidence has accumulated indicating that the policy and program strategies adopted during that period do not result in significant, long-term changes in the lives of participating youth. Short-term problem oriented policies and programs do not produce durable results."

More of the same services will not have the desired long-term impact. Neither will coordination and consolidation alone: it may make them more efficient, but not more effective. Again, as Gary Walker notes: "If social policy is to help these young people in their desire to lead decent economic lives, it must change. More of the same is not, based on the evidence, a sound approach."

How can we improve services to those most at-risk and in need? The answer lies in a developmental approach to young people, an approach supported by many respected professionals in our field.

In a paper commissioned by the Coalition, Susan Curnan and Alan Melchior of Brandeis University call for standards for high quality youth programs that include:

1. Focusing on youth as youth, and addressing the developmental needs of youth at different ages and stages, with appropriate program strategies;

2. Connecting work and learning, by creating learning-rich work experiences and transforming the way in which learning takes place in classrooms;

3. Providing opportunities for longer-term sequences of services that recognize employability development as a long-term investment for some youth, and that provide the support that many at-risk youth need to develop the higher level skills needed for long-term employment and advanced education;

4. Promoting quality in a decentralized system, through significant investments in staff development and in gathering the data (through assessment and evaluation) needed for effective management and improvement.

Karen Pittman, Michelle Cahill and Shep Zeldin of the Academy for Educational Development point out that youth development is an uneven process that is impacted by the social environment. They describe the need for "services (instruction, care, access to facilities); opportunities (chances to learn, earn and contribute); and supports (expectations, affirmation and guidance in setting and accomplishing goals."

A youth development approach responds to young people's needs at different ages and stages of their maturation and development. Progress is supported by sustained and caring relationships with adults and an array of opportunities to develop skills, knowledge and values. Key to this process is the flexibility to offer services at a pace and place that is determined by the needs of young people.

A positive developmental approach requires re-thinking of "positive outcomes" that are appropriate benchmarks in the developmental process. Such accomplishments as high school graduation, getting a job, working for ten out of the next twelve weeks, mastering a new computer program, writing a newsletter article or completing three months of community service, are not "ends" in themselves, but benchmarks of progress.

The mantra of those who believe in and practice effective youth development is that all youth have the potential to be effective learners, productive workers and contributing citizens. Jeff Howard's paper for NYEC, titled "Efficacy Paradigm" drives home this point, "The capacity of development is neither innate, nor fixed nor limited to any fraction of the population. It is rather a function of confidence and effective effort—factors subject to human management."

The National Youth Employment Coalition believes that such an approach to youth development requires a perspective and collective effort that extends across diverse federal agencies and includes a broad spectrum of sectors, including federal, state and local government, business and industry, community-based organizations, and non-profit and youth serving agencies. Youth development must include not only employment and training, but secondary and post-secondary education, juvenile justice, health and human services, national and community service, housing and neighborhood revitalization, and other areas in which youth have needs and can serve as valuable resources. Our view of youth development is that high-risk youth are more appropriately "high-opportunity" youth, because the potential returns on our investments are substantial, and the consequences of our failure to invest appropriately are so palpable. What is "at-risk" is

not just our youth, but our economic future, our quality of life, our families, and our communities. Such stakes require a broad, national response.

The four-pronged action agenda set forth in the preceding Executive Summary is based on our cumulative experience as a broad-based national Coalition, and on the findings and observations drawn from the nationwide series of dialogues and from the papers commissioned to further illuminate some key issues. What follows is a description of our principal findings about what we believe is needed to fundamentally re-invent our nation's systems and services for youth.

AN ACTION AGENDA: A NATIONAL COMMITMENT TO YOUTH

The National Youth Employment Coalition believes that a coherent youth development system requires a perspective and collective effort that extends across diverse federal agencies and includes a broad spectrum of sectors, including federal, state and local government, business and industry, community-based organizations, and non-profit and youth serving agencies. Youth development must include not only employment and training, but secondary and post-secondary education, juvenile justice, health and human services, national and community service, housing and neighborhood revitalization, and other areas in which youth have needs and can serve as valuable resources. Our view of youth development is that high-risk youth are more appropriately "high-opportunity" youth, because the potential returns on our investments are substantial, and the consequences of our failure to invest appropriately are so palpable. What is "at-risk" is not just our youth, but our economic future, our quality of life, our families, and our communities. Such stakes require a broad, national response.

As an interim first step, the National Youth Employment Coalition suggests that the Department of Labor should create and support a temporary Council on Quality in Youth Training, comprised of representatives of the youth employment and training stakeholder community. The role of this Council would be to identify TQM principles, practices, and measurement tools that could be applied systematically to promote quality assurance.

The National Youth Employment Coalition envisions a new national commitment to and investment in youth development—one encompassing the development of a national youth policy, national youth development goals and standards, and national youth development strategies, support structures, and accountability mechanisms. Specifically, our bold new vision suggests that as a nation, we should:

1. **Convene a White House Youth Development Summit.**

   It is essential to signal to the American people that youth are a priority, that they are resources to be developed and nurtured to reach their full potential. With a White House Summit on youth, we could set the stage by declaring that all youth have the potential to be not only literate, but also lifelong learners; not only employable, but also productive workers; not only self-sufficient, but also contributing citizens. This Summit would be a forum to highlight the needs of young people, particularly those who are out of school or well behind grade level; the needs of employers and the projected needs of the labor market; the needs of the system for capacity building and staff development; the needs of the nation, in

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terms of long-term research and an action agenda; and to promote and display programs that exemplify success in spite of the odds. A White House Youth Development Summit is also the logical launching pad for the national youth development goal-setting process described in #2 below.

2. Launch a Process to Develop National Youth Development Goals.

The new national youth development system needs policy and program goals at all levels that are high, clear, measurable and attainable. To develop these national goals, we need to initiate a broad-based national goals-setting process for transition of all youth to productive work, continuing education and responsible adulthood, modeled on our national education goals. The goal-setting process must invite all stakeholders to participate, to assure that they follow through with the policies and programs needed to achieve them. We endorse the creation of a non-partisan, free-standing institution to lead the goal-setting effort. Once goals are established, this institution should be empowered to track progress toward those goals. This National Report Card will help policy makers focus on progress, practitioners focus on areas that need improvement, and young people focus on pathways to economic security and responsible adulthood.

Modeled on the process for setting national education goals, the President, Congress, Governors, Mayors and other local elected officials, the Independent Sector, United Way, and service providers all need to focus on the same set of goals for youth development. Above partisan politics, and beyond narrow institutional perspectives, these goals must address the key ingredients in developing youth to become lifelong learners, productive workers, responsible individuals and contributing citizens. Once these goals are established, we will need to develop standards by which to measure progress, and a mechanism to communicate that progress to young people, parents, employers, and all other taxpayers.

3. Create a National Professional Development Capacity, including the Establishment of Accrediting Mechanisms

A national non-partisan, non-governmental body could be established to develop standards for best practices in youth employment and youth development. It could certify organizations that subscribe to these principles and demonstrate that they have a positive impact on the lives and economic opportunities of young people. It could specify standards for professional development and capacity building. Similar to the standards being developed in the educational arena, these youth development standards could be developed by a broadly defined group of youth service providers, policy makers, elected officials and other practitioners. Organizations and programs meeting the standards could receive accreditation in recognition of their demonstrated commitment to the highest standards of excellence.

Accreditation can be a positive force when it is supported by practitioners who are energized to raise the standards of the system, pool expertise, and help all programs reach for more efficient and effective services. The time is ripe to lead a movement of exemplary programs, committed to developing the human potential of young people and meeting the needs of employers for motivated, skilled competent employees.

4. **Conduct national demonstrations to learn better how to help out-of-school youth join the workforce.**

The U.S. Department of Labor, in conjunction with other appropriate agencies, should create, fund and support demonstration programs that experiment with effective ways to prepare youth for employment, continuing education, and adulthood. Clearly, we need to test policy alternatives, experiment with new techniques, devise incentives and demolish barriers for out-of-school youth. We would suggest pilots on a scale sufficient to impact all at-risk youth within whole neighborhoods or communities within large urban areas. These demonstrations should include transitions from alternative education to careers, patterned after the school-to-work models, and entrepreneurship and micro-enterprise development.

Training for high-skilled occupations, and early career education and awareness through collaborations with middle schools could be imbedded in these demonstrations. Likewise, these demonstrations could include experimental approaches to assessment, counseling, case management, leadership development, life-skills development, employability development, follow-up, and sustained services over the long-term.

All demonstrations should include rigorous data collection and evaluation to measure impacts and returns on investment. Likewise, these pilots and demonstrations should be developed with a view toward broader replication and transferability, experimenting with adaptations necessary under different geographic and economic conditions.

Many program models and pilots, such as the small but successful Quantum Opportunities Program, have elements which could be further expanded and tested with variation in program sites to learn more about the ingredients that make some sites particularly exemplary.

The net result of these demonstrations will be a broader variety of good practice for at-risk youth, and a more complete understanding of what works best for whom, under what circumstances, and at what costs.

PRINCIPAL FINDINGS: HOW WE CAN BETTER SERVE AT-RISK YOUTH

This Report calls for a national re-thinking of how we plan, implement, and measure efforts to develop young people in our country. By looking back over experience, we have collected findings about what needs to be changed, and by thinking ahead, we have crafted suggestions about how to make these changes:

Finding #1: Quick Fixes are Ineffective.

Programs that focus on short-term training services or employment preparation goals alone are insufficient for youth in at-risk circumstances. Evaluations have only confirmed what our Coalition members already knew

from direct experience—that short-term, single focus programs are ineffective for youth at risk.

What We Need: Long-term Coherent Youth Development Services.

Our nation needs coherent youth development policies and programs which incorporate positive youth development principles and strategies that support them.

Karen Pittman describes youth development as "an approach to youth programming and policy that stresses preparation and development—rather than prevention, deterrence and deficit reduction—as its ultimate goal, and the provision of supports and opportunities as essential strategies." To support young people's development, we must take into account their maturation physically, cognitively, socially, emotionally and morally. She suggests that "An overall approach to supporting youth in high-risk environments, then, must include sustained, long-term efforts to improve their natural environment—schools, neighborhood security and amenities, job opportunities (for youth and adults); peer groups, role models, family; and the array of permanent community organizations that provide opportunities for socializing, recreating, learning and contributing."

Ms. Pittman describes the challenge we face in shifting our focus from "defining success primarily in terms of short-term changes in knowledge or behavior to defining success in terms of changes in perception and processing that can have more lasting implications. The issue of comprehensive programs is not in terms of the range of services offered but in their approach to young people, which is defined by 1) their understanding of adolescent development and adolescent thinking, 2) their commitment to providing not only services, but supports (via sustained and caring relationships with adults that provide nurturing, guidance and monitoring) and opportunities (via challenges to use and develop skills, knowledge and values), and 3) their ability to tailor the timing, duration and mix of their offerings to the needs of their youth members."

"One of the principal lessons to be gained from the research on youth's development," according to Pittman, "is that the young people targeted for second-chance employment and training programming not only are not, but should not, be expected to benefit from programs modeled after adult programs. The second principal lesson is that young people are influenced not just by the program, but by their larger environment."

Thus, following this definition of youth development, a coherent youth development strategy would include:

- A multi-year investment in a young person's development that begins early, is age- and stage-appropriate, and individually tailored to specific needs;
- Individualized plans that respond to assessed needs and goals of youth;
- Opportunities for young people to interact with both peers and adults in work situations; and
- Workforce preparation and training to enable and encourage long-term attachment to the labor force;
- Education that provides opportunities to develop and apply higher order academic skills and critical thinking skills to real life situations;

- Higher education to equip our young people for a fast-changing and increasingly competitive world economy.
- Options and choices for young people to move through multiple jobs and developmental experiences over time;
- Community supports along the way to help youth become productive workers and responsible citizens, today and tomorrow.
- Accountability mechanisms which would, in effect, serve as a professional development support strategy.

To embrace this view, we need to alter prior attitudes and approaches which have shaped our programs, our expected outcomes and our definitions of success.

A national youth development system, which integrates training, employment, education, and social supports could provide the framework for new policies and practices which serve all youth, especially low-income, out-of-school and at-risk youth. It could help clarify roles and responsibilities for federal, state and local government, and engage all relevant stakeholders in the process. Youth program goals and standards would reflect outcomes which respond to the long term needs of youth and communities. Well-trained, highly competent professional youth workers would tailor individualized plans to the expressed and assessed needs of youth and employers. A coherent and complete range of services would be available, training would be appropriately linked with placement, and a job would not necessarily become an "end" but rather a means of youth development. Long-term follow-up would be the norm, and new definitions of success would take into account the starting place for each young person.

Furthermore, a national youth development system could help re-shape the broader environmental context for those most at-risk. Centering first on youth themselves, it is essential to create connections to caring adults, mentor-rich environments, and community- and neighborhood-based supports. Programs that focus on only a fragment of need—employment, education, health or safety, for example—would need to be combined or connected into a coherent, multi-year, integrated approach.

The collaboration we envision does not mean downsizing, and should not be used as an excuse to cut resources or costs in the short run. Costs associated with providing more coherent youth development initiatives should be viewed less as expenses and more as investments. If we were able to demonstrate high returns on investment, we could convince policymakers and the broader public that such investments were prudent and well-warranted.

In the context of youth development, three- to five-year Return on Investment (ROI) studies should be the standard. Measures should include long-term success in the labor market—earning real dollars, having real skills, becoming and remaining self-sufficient, staying off unemployment or welfare, staying out of trouble, and increasing income from year-to-year and job-to-job. Because we view youth development as a sustained effort over a long period of time, i.e., from ages 14 to 24, interim benchmarks are useful to give feedback to all the clients of the system. Interim benchmarks might include current youth work maturity and employability measures such as increases in income from year-to-year and job-to-job, increased educational attainment, charted against where they started, improved life skills and social skills, acquiring SCANS skills, understanding work responsibilities, performing community service, and taking responsibility for self and others.

Opportunities for Immediate Action:

1. **Wherever possible, interpret existing policies and programs to support youth development principles**. For example, existing education and training programs can encourage youth leadership by providing opportunities for peer instruction, and responsibilities in training, work, or community service settings.

2. **Broaden performance outcomes/reward structures.** In a youth development context, short-term employment as a sole measure of positive outcome is inappropriate. Employment is not necessarily an "end," but should be viewed as one part of a longer-term youth development strategy, more akin to an interim benchmark. Outcome measures should be age- and stage-appropriate, and take into account the length of the intervention. It is important to consider how far an individual youth has progressed during program services as they strive toward their longer term goals. For example, if a youth worked 26 weeks in the 52 weeks before training and 45 weeks in 52 after training, that would be a measurable positive outcome. It is possible to establish a positive activity standard which could include education, further training, community service, military service, employment or other activities included in the individual service plan.

3. **Expect, support and pay for long term support services.** Longer-term relationships with youth customers must be expected, supported, and paid for. Youth-serving staff and employers expressed the need for program counselors to remain involved with youth workers even after they become employed.

4. **Launch a public awareness campaign to demonstrate the value of paid work experience and job creation.** The public needs to understand that an investment in publicly supported work that prepares unemployed youth to be productive workers and community contributors can benefit everyone. Expand part-time volunteer and intern opportunities in non-profit human service management.

5. **Integrate youth programs to the extent possible.** Even though individual programs have their own authorizing legislation, regulations and eligibility requirements, it is still possible to connect these various pieces into a whole fabric to ensure broader coverage of youth within a community. New government initiatives promise to help construct a framework for multi-year, coherent youth development programming. The opportunities afforded by the School-to-Work Opportunities Act and National and Community Service programs should become a part of the continuum of services, opportunities and supports for youth at risk.

Finding #2: Current Quality Assurance Mechanisms Are Inadequate.

The current mechanisms for and investments in quality assurance, including measurement tools , management tools, and staff development supports, are inadequate.

Measurement Tools: Youth employment and training programs lack standard measurement tools to gauge a youth's knowledge gain or skill acquisition. As a young person proceeds through a program, tools are needed to measure their incremental increases in knowledge, skills and abilities.

Management Tools: Too much of our management approach rewards compliance rather than achievement, and emphasizes procedure rather than product. Youth training programs need to employ a Total Quality Management approach. Managing for quality means being customer-focused—letting the customer define the expectations for quality. This is different from customer service which is evaluated on criteria about the interaction as set by the company, not the customer.

We do not provide young people a menu of programs and services available within their community, nor do we provide program outcome information. During the Dialogues, many youth said they got information about the existence or quality of available programs through "luck" or family referrals and that they felt cheated by lack of access to the full menu of programs and services available to them. Employers in the DOL Dialogues often cited the lack of quality-related information on program outcomes as well as their need for more involvement of youth counselors in on-the-job follow-up.

Staff Development: Emphasis on fiscal accountability is important, but alone is insufficient as a mechanism to address program quality. To elevate program quality and improve outcomes, emphasis should also be placed on appropriate staff training on youth development and cross-agency collaborations. We must do a better job of integrating youth development concepts into employment and training programs, to ensure that the training provided is age- and stage-appropriate and relevant to the youth's specific needs.

What We Need: High Standards, Outcome Measures and Professional Development.

Our nation needs goals, standards and outcome measures for youth development that are commensurate with what we are trying to achieve. Likewise, we need professional development that builds capacity to more effectively serve youth most at-risk.

As suggested earlier, a non-partisan, independent body should lead the effort to develop national Youth Development Goals, and oversee the development of standards and assessment mechanisms. This goal-setting effort should include a broad array of stakeholders across disciplines.

We need assessment tools and management information systems that help assure quality to the young people they serve, to employers, to communities and to funders, including, and particularly, taxpayers. Quality assurance requires positive actions—capacity building, technical assistance and oversight—to ensure that youth programs and the professionals who run them are performing well.

We need mechanisms to measure satisfaction of youth and employers. Such measures can serve as management tools, and can be used for individual and community decision making program planning, operation and evaluation.

Following are suggestions for how to measure and document youth outcomes:

a. Measure individual progress against the SCANS competencies as specified in each individual's development plan.

b. Measure progress of each young person against his or her obligations under the goals set forth in the written agreement.

c. Measure specific outcomes appropriate in a youth development context, such as:

- **Labor force attachment.**
- **Career advancement**—overall rise in income from job-to-job and year-to-year.
- **Skill development**—increases in employability and work maturity competencies.
- **Educational development**—returned to school and working part-time.
- **Community contributions**—taxes paid by youth after employment.
- **Self-sufficiency**—savings in welfare and other public support payments.
- **Community service**—becoming a community contributor, volunteer and a good citizen.

d. Issue certificates of mastery with clear documentation of acquired competencies.

e. Use youth focus groups to share experiences, evaluate satisfaction, discuss areas for improvement.

Likewise, we need to measure and document Youth, Employer, Community and Taxpayer satisfaction. Some suggested measurement techniques might include:

a. Conduct written customer satisfaction surveys, at least annually or upon exit from program, and include youth, employers, and selected community members, especially those who serve on program advisory councils. One measure might be the degree to which the employer recognizes the value added by the youth (if relevant to the developmental stage of the youth and their individual plan). Does the employer retain the young person, invest in further training, or provide opportunities for advancement?

b. Convene local Town Hall meetings to discuss the community's youth needs and youth programs. These Town Hall meetings could address what's working, evaluate satisfaction, and enable various stakeholders to work collaboratively on problem-solving. Employers, the general public and the press could be included to ensure appropriate information dissemination.

To measure and document **Employer Satisfaction**, we could:

a. Measure youth skills developed, with a pre- and post-assessment of competencies.

b. Measure the quality and variety of learning-rich work experiences provided to youth.

c. Review employer records of mentoring, job coaching or supervision provided to youth.

Examples of such outcome measures already exist in selected places throughout the country. Client satisfaction measurements and client involvement are employed by some SDAs. One SDA employs a comprehensive customer oriented approach by soliciting direct input from youth clients, from businesses and the community at large. Some SDAs use Consumer Advisory Councils which meet monthly to discuss issues which surface in worksite monitoring visits and survey feedback, and develop recommendations for improvement. Public meetings encourage community involvement and serve as outreach to the community through the media. In some instances, students are asked to make a presentation to the Private Industry Council about their experience and their recommendations.

Opportunities for Immediate Action:

1. **The Department of Labor should create and support a temporary Council on Quality in Youth Training.** Representatives of the youth employment and training stakeholder community would comprise the Council. The role of the Council would be to identify, in a systematic fashion, Total Quality Management principles and practices that consider a range of measurement tools.

2. **Promote quality assurance through improved access to program information.** To help youth and those serving them gain access to information about programs and services available within the community, and make appropriate choices, we need to improve the flow of information, and develop tools that take advantage of new technologies. For example a national 800 number (with multi-lingual access) that connects many current hot-lines could be developed and pilot tested. We would like to see linkages among existing hot-lines, such as School-to Work, the Internal Revenue Service, the EITC program, the Job Corps, and the Department of Education's Goals 2000, and the addition of other appropriate programs and services. With more complete labor market and program information, and improved access to that information, young people are better equipped to participate in meaningful decisions about what they need now, what sequence is desired, and how selected choices might connect to future options and opportunities.

Finding #3: Youth Program Governance is Fragmented.

Rearranging the existing organizational boxes within a particular federal agency will not provide the type of cross-cutting, integrated federal, state and local governance structure needed to radically improve the quality of services we provide to young people.

Nor will intra-agency reorganization alone improve services, opportunities or supports for youth. Laterally, across federal agencies and across sectors, and vertically, among various levels of government and sectors, all levels of governance and types of stakeholders need to work together to develop a national system that supports best policy and practice, fosters collaboration and works toward common high goals and standards.

What We Need: A National System for Youth Program Planning and Accountability.

Our nation needs a national system or infrastructure that fortifies the federal, state, local, public and private collaborations on behalf of youth.

Rather than suggest changes to existing governance, we believe it is prudent to make the existing system more efficient and effective, more supportive of youth and employers alike. We believe that what is needed is a process through which we can engage all sectors of society that have some stake in positive youth development, in order to clarify for the general public the roles, responsibilities and relationships among and across infrastructures.

The roles of federal, state and local governments need to be more clearly defined, and support systems streamlined and interconnected. This improved infrastructure could promote the other elements described in this report—careful program planning, shared information, staff development, delivery system support mechanisms and quality assurance to develop young people's potential and meet employers' needs for competent and conscientious workers.

Our "second chance" systems cannot afford to play second fiddle or be second rate. Programs and services for those most at-risk must meet or exceed the highest standards of mainstream education and training institutions. Like the private sector, we need to develop long-term goals for continuous improvement and improved productivity. To meet the highest standards of quality, we need to develop information systems with common definitions for eligibility, performance measures and services. We also need national benchmarks and systems for measuring outcomes and effectiveness of services. Finally, we need to avoid perpetuating a separate stigmatized track for under-served kids. The "second chance" system needs to be connected to mainstream education and training to give youth clear paths into the system at whatever level is appropriate.

The workers we train and the youth we develop must meet the ultimate test: Do they contribute to the well-being and quality of life of our society? To achieve this, state and local governments and service providers need support systems to help organize resources to meet young people's broad developmental needs, and oversight mechanisms which promote quick corrective action when quality standards are not met.

Opportunities for Immediate Action:

1. **First, do no harm.** The biggest mistake that could be made would be to tinker at the margins, tweaking only certain aspects of the patchwork quilt we now have for youth. What is needed is to find all the relevant pressure points and push them simultaneously. What is needed is a systemic and systematic approach.

2. **Begin the process by which we will develop the broad national youth development infrastructure.** Because we see this activity ultimately as a longer term endeavor, we have described it more fully in the opening section, "An Action Agenda: A National Commitment to Youth." Please note, however, that we include an immediate interim suggestion to launch and focus the process.

Finding #4: There are Only Islands of Excellence in a Sea of Mediocrity.

***While there are many individual programs that work and large numbers of* professionals who succeed in spite of the odds, we have not managed to transfer expertise, transmit knowledge and replicate success at the scale or pace that is needed.**

Because program operation and service delivery occur at the local level, we need to develop strategies that focus on assisting practitioners with:

a. Quality recruitment, with clearly articulated job responsibilities and necessary skills.
b. Systematic orientation of new staff and training of all staff, in areas including gender and cultural awareness issues and youth development.
c. Appropriate salaries and benefits to attract, retain and motivate good people.
d. Constructive performance appraisal against high standards to acknowledge exemplary work and suggest improvements where warranted.
e. Cross training of staff, both within consortia of CBO staff, and across other types of local providers and programs. Cross training should include training across levels of governance, as appropriate.
f. Successful models and collaborations with employers and public sector unions to design capacity-building training consistent with the current initiatives to reinvent government, encourage use of successful models, and collaborative programs with employers and public sector unions in designing capacity-building training.
g. Networking and training opportunities such as: site visits, staff exchanges, electronic networks, professional memberships, conferences, scholarships, or tuition reimbursements.
h. Visible signals of support for staff development, involving community and youth participants, volunteer recruitment, development and deployment, in-house mentoring opportunities and other such visible staff development.

What We Need: Bridges to Connect Best Practices.

Our nation needs to invest in mechanisms to support replication of best practices and adaptation of successful program models, experimentation with incentives, cross-fertilization with other youth serving fields, and other strategies that build capacity, support professional development, and expand effective programs for youth most-in-need.

Investments in staff development and institutional development should be incorporated at all levels of the employment and training system, and especially at the service delivery level. Building the capacity of youth employment/youth development service providers, planners and administrators is a critical need. Young people who have experienced success can always point to one or more individuals—a teacher, counselor, job developer—who made the critical difference. Yet we often take front-line staff for granted and invest little to improve their skills. While we have learned a great deal about youth development, and what works best for whom, most front-line staff training amounts to whatever they can pick up on-the-job. Effective plans, systems, programs and courses of study depend on highly skilled professionals who are

trained in youth development. Conversely, when programs are weak, one can often point to weak skills in personnel.

Staff Development. Replication of good practice requires a long-term investment in building staff capacity. Developing competent staff requires an investment in building knowledge, skills, and abilities, and providing exposure to the theories, best practices, latest research results, and newest technologies to aid in youth development. One way to compress the learning curve is to have seasoned and respected professionals help their colleagues learn and apply what works.

Networks. A network, supported by professional trainers and experts can maximize the impact and facilitate successful adaptation of good practices to different environments. Practitioners and young people in programs can inform and improve this process. As Sandy Weinbaum and Frank Wurmusky recommend, a practitioners' network might include the following elements:

1. Development of research-driven principles in youth development—good teaching and learning, assessment, employment preparation, and organizations structure.
2. Inclusion of administrators, instructors, staff and young people in the professional and program development activities.
3. Financial incentives for participation in professional development networks.
4. Workshops and opportunities to observe examples of good practices.
5. Opportunities to present exhibitions of good practices.
6. Opportunities to discuss and advocate changes in local employment policies and practices.

Community-Based Organizations and Neighborhood-Based Services. Another important component in ensuring breadth and depth in program quality is to ensure that the local delivery system is efficient and effective, and directly accessible to the young people who need it. Just as we suggest a network of program practitioners, we need to support networks of community-based organizations and neighborhood-based services.

Opportunities for Immediate Action:

1. **Create a National Network which is cross-agency and multi-disciplinary.** This network would connect best practices across disciplines through professional development and dissemination of best practices.

2. **Create Local Networks to share practitioners knowledge and enable them to engage in professional development through and across organizations.** The Department of Labor should support Community Based Organizations that can help:

   a. Promote professional development
   b. Build collaborations inside communities
   c. Support and promote program accreditation
   d. Disseminate best practices, and
   e. Provide research information on best practices and help conduct research and provider training services.

Finding #5: Administrivia Gets In The Way.

The paperwork involved in administering the programs—extensive and redundant documentation, lack of common definitions across programs for elements as fundamental as eligibility determination—creates a bureaucratic bog.

A program operator in Chicago reports that fourteen different forms are used to gather information from young people at various stages. Different agencies often must collect the same information from the same youth. Ironically, complex intake procedures and requirements that demand difficult-to-obtain documentation, originally designed to ensure services to those at-risk, often exclude the very youth who are intended beneficiaries. There must be a balance between reasonable assurance that an applicant is telling the truth and the excessive documentation that is often required.

What We Need: A Seamless, Simplified Management Information System.

Our nation needs a computerized management information system that is coordinated, streamlined, accessible and portable across programs and agencies—from eligibility to intake to case management through follow-up.

We need clear and simple eligibility certification processes that enable at-risk young people to receive appropriate services regardless of who is providing those services. This cross-program approach would rely on common definitions, and a universal computerized intake, eligibility and case management system.

A seamless, simplified management information system that has cross-program compatibility and portability would enable us to improve customer service, improve youth access to and flow between programs and services, improve program accountability, save significant front-line staff time, and help collaboration across programs and across geographic jurisdictions. Such a system could help ensure that our youth development initiatives are truly responsive both to the needs of young people and to the realities of the local economy and labor market. Today, it is no longer the technology that stands in the way.

We must invest in a computerized case management system. Whatever extra costs are associated with the development of a seamless, simplified management information system can be more than justified by the longer term savings that would result from:

- Streamlining paperwork across programs,
- Improving client's access to cross-program information,
- Enabling quicker delivery of supportive and other services,
- Ensuring timely payment of necessary supports, stipends, child care, etc.,
- Establishing common eligibility requirements across programs, and
- Making more efficient use of staff time.

Ultimately, these savings could be reinvested in expanded or enhanced youth programs, including follow-up over several years.

Opportunities for Immediate Action:

1. **Federal: Reinvention of Government.** Reward program managers for effecting collaborations across programs and/or federal agencies. Rewards could be fiscal and otherwise. Imbed this in government personnel policies. Results for customers include enhanced services, reduced barriers to eligibility or participation, and coordinated services.

2. **State: Support demonstration projects for States' experimentation, and include cross-program waiver authority (legislative and regulatory) where warranted.** For example, the Secretary of Labor, together with the Secretaries of Education, HHS, and other relevant agencies, could grant waivers in selected pilot areas to allow reduced paperwork or cross-program eligibility of youth for programs including JTPA, Welfare JOBS, Job Corps, School Lunch, Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), Medicaid and related mental health counseling, the Perkins Vocational Educational Act, Title I, or education loans. The need for universal eligibility standards across programs was raised at virtually every focus group discussion and public Town Hall Meeting. The demonstrations could target high-risk geographic areas and have universal eligibility, thereby eliminating concerns over adverse effects of waivers on youth most at-risk.

3. **Local: Support local demonstrations for collaborative program funding, services, and management information systems.** This includes allowing local JTPA dollars not to be "first use" funds in collaborations with other programs and agencies. The purpose is to allow JTPA dollars to contribute to the development of local initiatives that meet broad objectives of systems change and improved client services, to enable JTPA to support collaborative, cross-program initiatives. Evaluations and monitoring of the use of these dollars should also take into account these broader purposes, and not be restricted only to JTPA-specific outcomes and measurements.

   It also includes investing in developing a collaborative, client-centered, computerized case management system. Survey the JTPA system and other human service systems in an area to identify and review existing computerized systems and learn about best practices. This could be followed by whatever experimentation is needed to develop a more effective computerized case management system in the local demonstration area and may inform us on national replication ideas. Computerized case management will improve customer service, aid in compliance monitoring, save significant front-line staff time, and help staff collaborate with other programs. It can be used as an intake and eligibility tool. This technology can enhance access to information for staff and clients. Paper work simplification and standardized definitions are a necessary first step.

SOME IMPLICATIONS OF THESE FINDINGS

For Youth—Hope. Too many young people have no hope because they are surrounded by the despair of their families, friends and neighbors. At a recent Department of Labor Dialogue meeting, a young JTPA participant told NYEC staff, "If it weren't for the support that I got from people at F.E.G.S., my mother would be going to another funeral—mine." This young man is now fulfilling his hopes, working full-time and

writing a play. In city after city during the Dialogue process, young people asked for the respect of their elders. Young people also demonstrated why they should be included in the development of plans and programs to help them. Though the services and supports JTPA can now provide to youth are often less comprehensive and developmental than what youth need, we must remember that, nevertheless, JTPA is still the last, best hope for many of our nation's young people.

For Youth Programs—Positive Youth Development. We have an opportunity to build on what works. Youth programs will need to refine or redefine their vision and purpose. Some programs will need to connect what they do best with what others do best. Some programs need to become more coherent, intensive, flexible and responsive. Others may need improved accountability mechanisms, or more rigorous oversight. Some may need to build capacity through concerted staff development and training. Some may simply need to be eliminated. All programs will need to ensure that they treat youth individually, taking into account age-related and gender-related needs, and holistically, viewing the youth as a whole person. In short, programs and services must be coherent, client-centered, and readily accessible—these are key elements in positive youth development.

For the JTPA System—Change. JTPA's current emphasis on short-term services, quick job placement, and little or no follow-through, and lack of coherent government leadership in encouraging collaborations across programs provides a flawed framework for a youth development system. However, we must not allow our own inability to "get it right" to serve as a convenient excuse to abandon our neediest youth. Young people who are out of school, out of work, disaffected and disconnected, or in school with little motivation to learn or acquire skills still need to become productive and contributing adults. And they won't get there from here without help. We need to connect all of our nation's youth serving efforts—across and among federal, state and local, public and private—to weave a youth development web from childhood to early adolescence to adulthood. Within this framework, a job would not be considered an "end," but merely one of many developmental benchmarks along the way.

For Communities—Collaboration. Community resources must be combined and leveraged in ways that support the development of all young people. Customer surveys or community "town hall" type meetings can help ensure that programs are designed to meet identified needs of both youth and employers. We need to make special efforts to provide youth with meaningful jobs and work experience in their own neighborhoods and within their larger communities. We need a public commitment on all levels to building a youth development system that embodies the best education, training, guidance and supports in the world for all youth in our communities where they live, learn, work and play.

For the Federal Government—Investment and Leadership. It is essential that the Federal government continue to invest in the future of all youth, especially at-risk and out-of-school youth. Further, it is incumbent upon the Federal government to provide the coherent leadership needed to develop policies and devise incentives to integrate youth development initiatives across agencies and among sectors. This investment and leadership will shape the state of America's workforce and could significantly determine our place in the world in the next century.

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APPENDIX

NATIONAL YOUTH EMPLOYMENT COALITION MEMBERS

The National Youth Employment Coalition represents 73 leading organizations across the nation that provide education and training services to poor, out-of-school and in-school youth, conduct research to find more effective ways to help young people make the transition to employment and self-sufficiency, and serve as advocates for at-risk young people. NYEC members share a common concern that our youth employment programs, schools and social service agencies must improve service quality and results, to increase employment preparation, education, and training opportunities for America's youth, especially the poor, the unemployed, and the underemployed.

Academy for Educational Development
AFL–CIO Human Resource Development Institute
Alianza Dominicana
Alternative Schools Network
American Youth Policy Forum
American Youth Work Center
Bay State Skills Corporation
Boys and Girls Clubs of America
Center for Budget and Policy Priorities
Center for Corporate & Education Initiatives, New England Medical Center
Center for Employment Training
Center for Human Resources - Brandeis University
Center for Population Options
Center for Remediation Design
Cities in Schools
Child Welfare League of America
Children's Defense Fund
Christian Children's Fund
Cities in Schools, Inc.
City Volunteer Corps (New York City)
Corporation for Public Management
F. E. G. S.
Fresh Air Fund
Girls, Inc.
Grand Street Settlement House
Homebuilders, Institute
Institute for Educational Leadership
Jobs for the Future
Jobs for Youth - Boston
Jobs for Youth - New York
Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation
National Academy Foundation
National Alliance of Business
National Association of Counties
National Association of Private Industry Councils
National Association of Service and Conservation Corps
National Association of State Directors/Voc. Tech.
National Child Labor Committee
National Council of La Raza
National Crime Prevention Council
National Network of Runaway Youth
National Puerto Rican Coalition
National Puerto Rican Forum
National Urban League
New England Community Action Association
New Ways to Work
New York City Job & Career Center
New York City Youth Employment Consortium
New York Private Industry Council
New York State JTPC
Northern Rhode Island Private Industry Council
OICs of America
Pennsylvania Conservation Corps
Phoenix Union High School District
PIVOT: NEW CHANCE
Public/Private Ventures
San Francisco Youth Employment Coalition
Stanley Isaacs Neighborhood Center
Tri–County Private Industry Council, Inc.
Training and Development Corporation
United Neighborhood Houses of New York, Inc.
United Way of New York City
US Basics, Inc.
US Peace Corps
Vocational Foundation, Inc.
WAVE, Inc.
West County Community Services
Women in Community Service
YMCA of the USA
YWCA of the USA
Young Adult Learning Academy
YouthBuild - U.S.A.
Youth Service America

8/29/94

How this Report Was Prepared

On June 27 and 28, 1994, thirty-five members of the National Youth Employment Coalition (NYEC) met to discuss the state of employment and training programs for disadvantaged young people in America. This report synthesizes not only that conference, but also many other NYEC meetings, events and a set of specially commissioned papers by practitioners, policymakers and researchers. These papers are referred to throughout this report, and are attached for deeper review. Valuable insights were gathered from NYEC's participation in nine of the fifteen JTPA Dialogues conducted nationwide by the U.S. Department of Labor on improving and strengthening job training and program assistance to the disadvantaged.

Information was also developed from site visits to a variety of youth employment programs, organized by NYEC for DOL staff in conjunction with the Dialogues. DOL staff had an opportunity to tour youth employment and training programs and to have conversations with young people and front-line staff. This Report also incorporates comments and counsel provided by our Coalition members as we circulated drafts for review. However, because our Coalition represents a diverse group of organizations, not every finding in this Report is unanimously endorsed.

Acknowledgments

The Coalition would like to thank our Chair, Erik Payne Butler for his leadership in placing this challenge before us, and in guiding our efforts. We extend our thanks to Joan Wills for her continuous dedication, clear focus, and countless hours of work on this Report. Joan also conceived of the eight papers commissioned by the National Youth Employment Coalition, provided leadership for their development, and editorial guidance. We also extend our gratitude to NYEC Executive Committee members, particularly Russell Owens, Gary Kaplan, Steve Trippe and Rae Linefsky for their extra time and effort to push our collective thinking. We would like to thank Alan Zuckerman, Kristina Moore and Erika Bryant for synthesizing the collective input of the Coalition members and crafting this Report. And, we extend our appreciation to Janet R. Reingold of Reingold & Associates, for her thinking, writing and editing assistance.

Most important to thank are the NYEC members, too many to name, who participated in the June NYEC meeting to develop these findings and the many members who have reviewed the earlier drafts, provided examples from their experience and devoted their time and thoughtful input to this process. Finally, thanks are due to U.S. Department of Labor Assistant Secretary Doug Ross, Associate Assistant Secretary Josephine Nieves, Project Officer Roland Brack and their staff who planned and supported the nationwide Dialogue process.

The NYEC was pleased to be asked to assist in the process and develop this report which represents the best advice of youth practitioners, researchers and advocates who make up the National Youth Employment Coalition. We welcome corrections, suggestions and improvements, and we apologize in advance for any errors or omissions in this Report.

Papers Commissioned by the National Youth Employment Coalition

The National Youth Employment Coalition commissioned eight papers, some of which are referenced in this Report. These papers provide support for our observations and are intended to inform the new youth development system. We wish to thank each of the contributors:

Karen J. Pittman, Michele Cahill, and Shepherd Zeldin
Youth Employment Preparation Through A Youth Development Lens: Broad Recommendations for Sustaining Change
September 1994

Andrew Churchill
How Can We Adopt the Positive Experiences of School-to-Work Programs, Especially Work-Based Learning, to JTPA Programs?
August 1994

Sandy Weinbaum and Frank Wirmusky
Building On Best Practices in Youth Employment: What works, How do we know, How do we sustain and replicate them
June 1994

Gary Walker
Dilemmas and Directions in Youth Social Policy
August 1994

Susan P. Curnan and Alan Melchior
Moving Towards Quality Programs: Defining Criteria for Quality Program Design Based on Lessons from Research and Experience
July 1994

Lori Strumpf
Work-Based Learning: Learning to Work; Working to Learn; Learning to Learn
June 1994

Jeff Howard, Mia Roberts, and Verna Ford
Learning to Work—Working to Learn (Job Training in a Global Economy)
August 1994

Charles G. Tetro
Customer Service in a Youth Development System
September 1994

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